

from JOHN MATHEWS

Having the lists of Allchin clients for two years certainly gives the opportunity to see if there is a constant alphabet used by Allchin at that time. If the style of letters for the perfins of those clients is constant, and distinct from alphabets of other suppliers of perforated stamps of the same period, then there is a good chance that other perfins using that style of alphabet also belonged to Allchin clients.

A similar situation occurred with Australian perfins, where one particular stamp vendor in Melbourne appears to have done much perforating-to-order in batches. In this case, however, the holes look much different to those of a normal customised perforator, giving the appearance of a central puncture of the paper and the surrounding paper pushed aside as the pins penetrated. This seems to indicate tapered pins or pins with a relatively large clearance in the holes in the base plate. These pins are most likely to have been fitted into a grid of holes in most cases since many varieties of letter size and spacing are found for a given letter combination.

But back to the Allchin dies. Those of JM/&C2 (J5293.01b) and Y/Co.L^d.(Y0225.01) have the Co. so similar that it suggests that this may have been a standard partial die (along with "&" and "L^d"). The "JM" and "Y", respectively, have a rectangular grid format, with the row spacing slightly different to the column spacing. So it may have been that the top line of these dies was done individually for each pattern and a combination of standard dies used for the second line.

The J.B/&Co. (J0660.03B) certainly displays rectangular grid characteristics at first glance. But the spacing within the "&" is different to that for the "J" and "C". Also, the right side of the "B" does not fit a row-and-column pattern.

The "U.B/L^d" (U0260.02) and "K/D.L^d" (K0550.03v) patterns both strongly exhibit rectangular grid characteristics. However, the spacing between the letters is not a multiple of the row or column spacing and this would possibly indicate separate dies for each letter.

What could be the alternative to a rectangular grid? It could be that the person producing the dies did not have confidence in drilling curves to produce "Normal" letters. He may have used a template for each letter which had been laid out on a rectangular grid. The table of the drilling apparatus typically would have had facilities for adjusting its position by measurable amounts in the "back-and-forth" and transverse directions. Maybe the driller moved the table by fixed increments in each direction between holes to produce the rectangular grid effect.

Like Dave, I feel that removable pins in a grid of holes for these dies is unlikely.